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EDITORIAL

GOOD FOR THE NEGROES!

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE right key was struck at the negroes' convention of Boston last Tuesday, the 29th inst. The music is not yet orchestral, far from it; nor is it yet even quite in accord with the laws of melody. For all that the key is promiseful.

The negro constitutes, by reason of the special history back of him, a special division in the ranks of Labor. In no economic respect is he different from his fellow wage slaves of other races; yet by reason of his race, which long was identified with serfdom, the rays of the Social Question reached his mind through such broken prisms that they were refracted into all the colors of the rainbow, preventing him from appreciating the white light of the Question. His inability to realize his status has long been the opportunity of quacks and fools, designing men and visionaries, with himself, of course, as the victim. Accordingly, all manner of schemes have been schemed for the negro. At the Boston convention he decided to henceforth scheme for himself, and planting a well-aimed kick in the faces of {the} Booker T. Washingtons, who seek to turn him into a perpetual ward; of the Carnegies, who seek to use him as a pedestal on which to pose as philanthropists; and of the Republican party, that has claimed him for its own particular serf, he has decided to paddle his own canoe.

The negro Boston convention was right in repudiating Booker T. Washington,—guardians, especially those who go out of their way hunting for wards, are ever supported by these. If the negro is not yet able to be his own guardian, he never will be. He might as well try.

The negro Boston convention was right in repudiating Carnegie. Philanthropy, capitalist, or Carnegie philanthropy, means to plunder wholesale and return retail. The negro might as well keep the wholesale that he is plundered of as a workingman and let the retail go.

The negro Boston convention was right in repudiating the Republican party. Only they are members of a party who have a direct voice in its councils and its administration. Long cheated with the claim that the Republican party was their

party, they have found out that it had for them no use except as food for cannon.

These three acts jointly struck the right key. And in striking it the negroes, represented at the convention, at least gave token of the instinct that will attune them to the Socialist or Labor Movement, in whose ranks alone, as conscious human beings, their place is beside their fellow wage slaves who are battling, not for wardships, not for philanthropic crumbs, not for the distinction of pavement for any capitalist political party, but for complete emancipation, individual human sovereignty, and the full fruits of the wealth they produce.

May the music, started in Boston, quickly spread among the negroes throughout the land, and help swell the orchestra that the class-conscious or Socialist working men have started.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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